

XXII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Notices, &c.*

WE have received the following letters :—

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Norwich, February 22, 1862.

SIR,—In addition to the three specimens of the Shore-Lark (*Alauda ulpestris*) taken at Brighton in November 1861, as described by Mr. J. D. Rowley in the last Number of 'The Ibis,' I am now able to record the capture of five others in Norfolk, between the first week in November and the 10th of January, 1862. The first was killed at Yarmouth on the 17th of November, the second at Sherringham on the 9th, and the third at Yarmouth on the 12th; and no others were apparently noticed on any part of our coast until the last pair were also procured at Sherringham, during the first week of the present year. Having been shot in different localities, I have been unable to ascertain how many of these birds were seen on each occasion, or whether they were the only ones observed at the time. Most probably there were others, which escaped destruction; and as these birds were performing a southward migration, it is by no means impossible that the five specimens seen by the Brighton bird-catcher, of which he caught two on the 15th of November, and one on the 16th, were the remnant of a flight, already thinned on their passage down our eastern coast.

Very severe gales had visited us for some days just previous to the appearance of the three November specimens, and several Little Auks were picked up at the same time in different parts of the country; but although some of these storm-driven sea-birds showed symptoms of privation, the Shore-Larks, both in flesh and plumage, were in high condition. It is somewhat singular that both those killed here and those netted at Brighton should all be male birds, as proved by dissection, though differing more or less in brightness of colouring. I was fortunate enough to examine the five Norfolk Shore-Larks as soon almost as they were sent up to this city for preservation. All exhibited a transition state between winter and summer plumage; but in those killed in the month of November the bands of black and yellow on the throat were very bright, and the horns plainly marked, more espe-

cially in the one from Sherringham, which had also a richer vinous tint on the wings; but in each the band over the crown of the head was but slightly traceable. Of the two killed at Sherringham on the 9th and 10th of January, one was evidently an older bird than the other, with a perfect black gorget and bright yellow tints on the throat and neck; the horns were well developed, and the cheeks black. The forehead, however, was more white than yellow, with a very indistinct black band mixed with yellow on the upper part of the head; the points of the shoulders vinous. The younger specimen had a smaller gorget, each black feather being tipped with yellow; the black on the cheeks also blended in the same manner. The horns slight, but quite distinguishable; no perceptible band across the head; forehead yellowish white; and several reddish longitudinal spots on the breast, immediately below the gorget.

At the time when these last two birds were obtained, the weather was very mild; but a severe frost had broken up about ten days before. Besides these recent specimens occurring in so singular a manner about the same time, I know of only three other examples of the Shore-Lark killed in this county—a young male in March 1830, an adult male at Yarmouth in November 1850, and a third male, also adult, at Holkham in December 1855. I have before alluded to the curious fact of all those procured being male birds, and it is worthy of notice in so accidental a visitant that, with one exception, all in the above list appeared during the winter months.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.,

H. STEVENSON.

P.S. An adult male of the Little Owl (*Strix passerina*) was taken alive on board a fishing-smack off Yarmouth about the first week in February.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Australian Museum, Sydney,
Nov. 10th, 1861.

SIR,—A few days ago I purchased, from M. Jourde, Surgeon of the French whaling-ship 'Général d'Hautpoul,' a fine collec-

tion of birds from the Brampton shoals and adjacent islets, some of which appear to me as yet undescribed. I may be mistaken, but I will furnish you with a short description of these specimens.

1. *ATTAGEN ARIEL*? (Gould, B. Austr. vii. pl. 72.)

I do not know whether this is the species described by Mr. Gould. The female at least differs from the figure in Gould's work in having a band round the neck, and the breast white, without any wash of rufous. The air-bag is only indicated by a strip of bare skin hardly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, whereas this bag is of very large size in the male bird. M. Jourde informs me that the birds were breeding in the month of July, he having succeeded in securing an egg and a young bird.

The egg, of which I beg to enclose a sketch, looks more like the egg of a raptorial bird than that of a sea-bird*. The young bird (of about three or four weeks) is white, with black wing-feathers. This bird is very plentiful about the Brampton shoals, and builds a nest of a few sticks, seaweed, &c., in the low bushes and small trees.

2. *RALLUS PECTORALIS*. (Gould, B. Austr. vi. pl. 76.)

There are some Rails on these low islands also which do not differ much from our common Rail (*Rallus pectoralis*). One of them, however, is much darker, and was pointed out to me by M. Jourde as the female.

3. *TOTANUS GRISEOPYGIUS*. (Gould, B. Austr. vi. pl. 38.)

These examples are identical, as far as my judgment goes, with the above-named Australian species.

4. *NUMENIUS UROPYGIALIS*. (Gould, B. Austr. vi. pl. 43.)

In these specimens, and in those preserved in the Australian Museum from this continent, I cannot detect any difference.

5. *ANOÛS* — ?

This bird is very much like *A. melanogenys* of G. R. Gray, figured in the 'Genera of Birds,' but differs from that species in the white ring round the eye, which is partly interrupted. I

* There is some mistake here, as the egg of the Frigate-bird is white. See Mr. G. C. Taylor's paper in 'Ibis,' 1859, p. 150.—ED.

enclose a sketch of this bird and of its egg. M. Jourde found it also breeding on the islands in the Brampton shoals.

6. CHARADRIUS — ?

Apparently identical with our *Ch. xanthocheilus*. I will furnish you with a sketch of it by the next mail.

7. HIATICULA — ?

Of this also I will send a sketch.

The following birds were captured at sea by M. Jourde :—

1. ANOÛS CINEREUS.

Lat. $37^{\circ} 8' 10''$ S., long. $173^{\circ} 18' 50''$ E., July 7, 1860. Eyes blackish blue.

2. ONYCHOPRION PANAYA ?

Near the Brampton shoals.

3. XEMA — ?

This bird, which is not figured in Gould's 'Birds of Australia,' was captured off the coast of New Zealand, lat. $46^{\circ} 54'$ S., long. $165^{\circ} 58'$ E. I enclose a sketch of it. Head, neck, tail, and under surface white; back and wing-coverts pale silvery grey, some of the feathers spotted with greyish brown, fringed with white at the end. Quills, the first two black, with a large spot of white near the tip of each, and minutely white-tipped; the remainder of the wing-feathers white, with black band and white tip, except the third feather, which is black, but also tipped with white.

4. PROCELLARIA HÆSITATA.

Lat. $32^{\circ} 10'$ S., long. $176^{\circ} 25' 42''$ E., June 9, 1860. Eyes blackish brown.

5. PHAËTON PHÆNICURUS.

Found breeding in July on the Shoals. Young bird a week old of a uniform light-grey colour.

Among the birds obtained in New Zealand, I find a Stilt identical with our Australian *Himantopus leucocephalus*. M. Jourde attaches the following note to this specimen :—

“Cet oiseau a été tué dans l'intérieur de la Nouvelle Zélande, et sous une latitude de 44° à peu près. Celui qui l'a abattu, et

qui est un des plus déterminés chasseurs du pays, a dit n'en avoir jamais vu un pareil à Nouvelle Zélande. Mai 1861."

The head is of a clear white. The specimens in the Museum are all more or less speckled with darker feathers; but this is all the difference I am able to detect.

The most interesting bird of the whole collection is a white variety of *Procellaria gigantea*, quite white, with only a few greyish feathers on the back and on the sides of the wings. I gave Dr. Bennett a description and measurement of this bird, and you will receive it very likely by this mail also.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

GERARD KREFFT.

With reference to the last-named species, Dr. Bennett writes as follows (Sydney, November 20th), enclosing Mr. Krefft's sketch:—

"This large Petrel was shot at sea, in lat. $33^{\circ}59'$ S., long. $169^{\circ}36'$ E., on the 22nd of October, 1860, as the label states which is attached to the specimen. The eyes are described as blue-black; the mandibles of a light horn-colour; the legs and feet black. The whole of the plumage was of a beautiful white colour, very slightly sprinkled with black over the throat and abdomen, but more so over the upper part of the head, neck, back, and scapulars. It was about the size of the Giant Petrel, of which no doubt it is an interesting variety, and was the only one seen by the whaler. Mr. Krefft, acting curator of the Australian Museum, kindly made me the drawing I send. The specimen, which is set up in the collection of the Australian Museum at Sydney, accords with the bird I mentioned in my 'Gatherings of a Naturalist,' pp. 76, 77, as named by sailors 'The Flying Leopard.' It is there regarded as a singular variety of one of the smaller species of Albatros."

The following extract is from a letter received from Mr. Blyth, dated Maulmein, November 3rd:—

"Tomorrow morning I start for the Youzalin (or *Yoou-za-leen*) district, in the interior of the province of Martaban, a region of frost and ice during the height of the cold weather, and of pine forests (*Pinus latteri*, if really distinct from *P. kassiana*, which I

rather doubt). I travel in boats, poling about six days up the River Salwan and then two days up the Youzalin River, whence I have three marches over the hills. With the stream, the whole distance back can be accomplished in three days. I have collected nothing new here, at least among birds, though I have several good specimens. My principal haul has been, and is likely to be, among the fishes. The Youzalin district is, however, quite an untrodden region to the zoologist, and I may fairly expect to do something for ornithology. On the hill where I have been residing, *Crypsirhina varians* is quite common, also *Lanius hypoleucus*, and other species little known to European collections. *Hirundo rustica* has appeared in considerable numbers within these few days; and I have also observed a Cypseline bird with the flight and appearance of *Cypselus apus*—doubtless *C. vittatus*. The latter was always far out of shot. But animal life here is extraordinarily rare (fishes excepted) even in the most likely-looking hill-jungles. You may infer from the tone of this letter that my health is quite restored, and my strength too, pretty well, insomuch that I can already stand a fair amount of hill-clambering.”

Herr August v. Pelzeln, writing from Vienna (December 12), kindly informs us that the Imperial Collection in that city contains three examples of our *Accipiter pectoralis* ('Ibis,' 1861, p. 313, pl. x.). "All three are females, and were collected by Natterer, two at Ypanema and one at Borba in Northern Brazil." Natterer's MSS. contain the following notice concerning this species:—"Iris dirty gamboge-yellow; ring round the eye and feathered lores dark yellow, verging rather towards olive-green; the strongly marked orbital ridge yellowish olive-green, more green than the nearest part of the naked skin; cere and hinder part of the base of the bill dark greyish green, the bill further forwards, as far as in a line with the cere, bluish grey, the rest of it black; nostrils very large and round, and at the hinder edges furnished with a perceptible cartilage; tarsi and toes dirty gamboge-yellow; claws black."

Herr v. Pelzeln's communication is of great value, as furnishing us with the true *patria* of this bird, of which we were previously ignorant.

With reference to our surprise that *Podiceps auritus* should have been found breeding at the Lake of Tamieh in Faguin, Egypt, as expressed in our last Number ('Ibis,' 1862, p. 81), Mr. Gurney reminds us that this bird breeds in Algeria ('Ibis,' 1860, p. 159) and in Epirus (*ibid.* p. 349), and that "another confirmation of its being a southern species is the fact of its being an extremely rare species in this country, whilst its northern congener, *P. cornutus*, is one of our common English visitors."

By the latest tidings which have been received from Messrs. Salvin and Frederick Godman, their explorations in Central America seem to be progressing prosperously. They did not, however, get away from Dueñas until the middle of December. Previously to leaving, they made a successful ascent to the summit of the Volcan di Fuego, and Mr. Salvin was twice able to reach the peak from which the fire proceeds. The collections they have made seem far to surpass any formed previously by Mr. Salvin at Dueñas. Between 700 and 800 bird-skins, besides mammalia and reptiles, and about 1300 butterflies, with a considerable quantity of botanical specimens, are, we understand, already on their way home. Affairs in Guatemala are unfortunately in rather a critical position just at present, and our friends have had to abandon their projected journey through Costa Rica. However they were going shortly in quest of larger game—Pumas and Tapirs—into the mountains of Santa Cruz, and after that into Vera Paz for a raid to the northward.

We have not had many ornithological particulars from Messrs. Salvin and Godman of late; but it would appear that they had obtained several specimens of *Oreophasis derbianus* among other 'Turkeys,' while Quezals (*Pharomacrus mocinno*) were brought in almost every day, and *Gallinago wilsoni* seems to have occasionally afforded very good sport. On the Volcan di Fuego, at the time of Mr. Salvin's first ascent, only sixteen species of birds were observed, of which some, such as *Junco cinereus* and *Certhia mexicana*, are peculiar to such heights. On the second expedition Mr. Salvin met with one fresh *Mniotilta*. His last letter was dated "Guatemala, January 2nd, 1862."

The Mission sent by the Government of Mauritius to the new King of Madagascar, and of which Mr. Edward Newton was a member, returned safely to the former island about the middle of November last, having experienced a most hospitable reception from His Majesty, Radama II. In order to complete their journey before the rains set in, the Ambassadors were compelled to lose no time on the road, and hence not many facilities for collecting were available. However Mr. Newton and Dr. Roch, who was the medical gentleman attached to the deputation, seem to have collected between them specimens of about *sixty* species of birds, of which the former has already sent home examples of about *five-and-twenty*, and we hope in our next Number to give some further details respecting them.

Writing from Mauritius, February 3rd, 1862, Mr. E. Newton says :—

“The last mail brought me, from the Acting Civil Commissioner at Seychelles, three fully fledged young of the beautiful Pigeon, *Alectrænas nitidissima*. Unfortunately one died the day after I got it, but the other two are alive and well. They are difficult birds to keep, as they will eat nothing that I can give them but berries and small fruit. Luckily I have at this time a sort of fruit in great profusion in my domain ; but it will only last for a fortnight, and then I do not know what I shall do for them. The one that died I have skinned, but it is not a good specimen. The living birds are very funny in their habits, never going on to the ground unless they are obliged ; and they show a wonderful capability in stretching to a great distance from their perch, sometimes with their heads nearly perpendicularly downwards, so as to pick a fruit off the floor of their cage without descending to it.”

Mr. F. Plant has within the last few weeks taken his departure for Mauritius *en route* to Madagascar, where he intends passing some time in collecting objects of natural history. His agent in this country is Mr. S. Stevens, of 24 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.